



Best Value Benefits Survey 2006/7

Full Report (April 2007)



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on behalf of The Borough of Poole.

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1: Executive Summary

The following summary points have been taken directly from the research findings section of the report, in which more detailed results may be found.

1.1: Best Value Performance Indicator

- BV80A: Contact with the office
 - Overall 84% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 3.03%)
- BV80B: Service in the office
 - Overall 83% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 4.01%)
- BV80C: Telephone Service
 - Overall 77% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 5.78%)
- BV80D: Staff in the Office
 - Overall 83% satisfied (confidence interval of +/- 3.13%)
- BV80E: Forms
 - Overall 66% satisfied (confidence interval of +/-3.97%)
- BV80F: Speed of Service
 - Overall 73% satisfied (confidence interval of +/-3.54%)
- BV80G: Overall satisfaction
 - Overall 79% satisfied (confidence interval of +/-3.23%)

1.2: Contacting the Office

- Respondents were generally positive about all aspects of getting in touch with the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed they were satisfied overall and that the benefits office is easy for them to get to.
- These were closely followed by being given the name of the contact in the office, the staff tried to sort out the claim over the phone and the opening hours were inconvenient.

1.3: Visiting the Office

- Just under two thirds of respondents (63%) had to go to the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim.
- Those respondents visiting the office were generally positive about all aspects of visiting the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that the benefits office was clean and tidy, they were satisfied overall with the experience of visiting the office and they could talk to the necessary person in a private place.
- Encouragingly respondents applied more neutral ratings to negative statements; if they had to wait a long time before they could see the person they needed to and more seats are needed in the Council's benefit's office.

1.4: Telephoning the Office

- Over a third (39%) telephoned the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim.
- Those respondents telephoning the office were generally positive about all aspects of telephoning the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that they were satisfied overall with the telephone service provided, that the query was dealt with swiftly and that the call was answered quickly.
- Encouragingly respondents applied more neutral agreement ratings to negative statements; when they called the benefits office they were transferred between several different people and if it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff.

1.5: Benefits Office Staff

- Respondents were generally positive about all aspects of the staff in the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed staff were friendly, overall they were satisfied with the service provided, staff treated them with respect and enquiries were explained in a way they could understand.
- Encouragingly respondents applied more neutral agreement ratings to the negative statements; that they weren't always confident what the staff said was correct, if they felt unable to ask the questions they wanted and staff were in a rush.

1.6: Benefits Claim Forms

- Respondents were generally neutral about aspects of the forms used in the benefits office.
- They mostly agreed that overall they were satisfied overall with the Housing/Council tax benefits claim forms and the information that came with the form was helpful.
- These were closely followed by if the Housing/Council Tax claim form was difficult to fill in, could quickly fill in the form and if the letters sent about their claim were difficult to understand.

1.7: Claim Decision

- The vast majority of claims (93%) were successful.
- Nearly three quarters (73%) were satisfied to some extent with the time taken to make a decision on their claim, with over a third being very satisfied (34%). Under a fifth (17%) reported dissatisfaction to some extent whilst the remaining tenth (10%) were neutral.

1.8: Overall Satisfaction

- Over three quarters (79%) were satisfied to some extent with the service provided by the benefits office, with less than half being very satisfied (41%). A tenth reported being dissatisfied to some extent or were ambivalent (10% and 11% respectively).

1.9: Service Improvements

- Around a quarter think that the areas of the service most in need of improvement are the time taken to make a decision on a claim for Housing/Council tax benefit (27%) and the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form (20%).
- Relatively few thought that the other areas of the service needed improving and just over a tenth (14%) thought none of these needed improvement.

1.10 Nature of Claimants

- Half (51%) have lived in the area for 21+ years, under a fifth (16%) for 11-20 years and a tenth (10%) for under 1 year. Small proportions have lived in the area for 3-5 years, 6-10 years and 1-2 years (9%, 8% and 7% respectively).
- Over half (57%) of respondents were female.
- The average age of applicants was 53 years.
- A small number considered themselves part of an ethnic minority group (2%).
- Around a third reported being wholly retired from work (32%) whilst under a fifth reported being permanently sick/disabled, an employee in a part-time job, looking after the home or an employee in a full-time job (14% and 14%, 12% and 11% respectively). Most of the remaining were unemployed and available for work, doing something else, self employed, on a government supported training scheme or in full time education (7%, 6%, 3%, 1% and 1% respectively).
- Over half of the respondents (51%) reported having a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity.

2: Introduction

2.1: The Borough of Poole

The Borough of Poole is the local authority for the area and provides services and facilities to all local residents. As such the Council has a duty to provide the best quality services to the public in the most efficient and effective manner.

Consultation is a route by which Councils can monitor the quality and cost of services, and investigate issues of importance to stakeholders. Assessing the views of residents and service users is key to this process, so the Council has embarked on a full and sustained public consultation programme to ensure that decisions are made in line with public opinion and so that communities are more involved in the decision making process.

2.2: Best Value Benefits Survey

This report details the results of the Best Value Benefits Survey 2006/7, addressing the Council's service provision to benefits claimants, an exercise that must be repeated at least every three years under the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidelines.

Best Value consultation is a nation-wide mechanism by which Councils can monitor the quality and cost of services they provide for the public by using standard Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) to assess service usage and satisfaction levels. These performance indicators are fed back to the DCLG for national comparison.

The results of this survey will be compared (where available) to those collected in 2003 and a peer Unitary Authority where appropriate to identify trends in behaviour and opinion. They can also be used as a baseline for future consultation.

2.3: The Market Research Group (MRG)

The Council commissioned the Market Research Group (MRG), based at Bournemouth University, to undertake this research. MRG aims to be a key independent resource for the provision and interpretation of market intelligence for its clients.

The group offers expertise, experience and advice in the field of market research, tailored to suit the needs of individual organisations. MRG has specialised in consultation of this sort, and has numerous Best Value consultations to its name.

2.4: Project Aims & Objectives

2.4.1: Project Aims

The project's research aim was to provide the Council, and the DCLG, with reliable information about the nature and views of Benefits applicants on various topics of interest. The results of the research will help the Council to make informed decisions about the future of the services provided for applicants in light of comparisons with other authorities and can be used as a basis for further in-depth research.

2.4.2: Project Objectives

More specifically, the project sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To fulfil the requirement placed upon the Council to report back its BVPIs to the DCLG.
- To identify the behaviour of benefits applicants when claiming benefits.
- To investigate claimant views of contacting the Council.
- To investigate claimant views of visiting the Benefits Office.
- To investigate claimant views of telephoning the Benefits Office.
- To investigate claimant views of Benefits Office staff.
- To investigate claimant views of claim forms and materials.
- To assess satisfaction with the time taken to process claim decisions.
- To assess overall satisfaction with the service provided.
- To determine the level of successful and unsuccessful benefits claims.
- To investigate the nature of benefits applicants.
- To collect any additional comments and suggestions of relevance.
- To identify any significant differences between respondent groups, and benchmarked data from a similar survey conducted by the Council in 2003 and peer organisation results.

3: Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to undertake the Best Value Benefits Survey 2006/7, as outlined in the DCLG guidance documents.

3.1: Research Design

3.1.1: Target Population

Under the Best Value guidance the target population, those of interest to the project, was defined as all benefits claimants who received a decision on their claim between 1st June 2006 and 28th July 2006 or 1st November 2006 and 29th December 2006 (two sampling windows).

3.1.2: Sample Frame

DCLG specified that the Benefits Department's claimant database be used as the sample frame in this instance. This provided a complete list of claimants who had received a decision letter within the specified timeframe, and included their address details. This database totalled 2,000 contacts, 349 responded in the first sampling window and 341 responded in the second sampling window (with 2 respondents unknown due to missing ID numbers).

DCLG indicated that a maximum confidence interval of +/-4% (at the 95% confidence level) be achieved for each performance indicator. This simply means that we can be 95% confident in the results within this specified margin of error, although it should be noted that breakdowns by demographic data will have larger confidence intervals.

3.1.3: Sample Size

In order to achieve this confidence interval a sample of 625 completed interviews was required in total. In the event 608 complete and valid responses were achieved (response rate of 30%) within the fieldwork period, meaning that a confidence interval of +/-3.6% was achieved (at the 95% confidence interval).

3.1.4: Sampling Technique

If the response was to provide representative results it was essential that the respondents reflect the demographic profile of the local population, reducing the need to apply data weighting. As the sample frame was large enough it was decided to contact a random sample of residents, rather than a census sample (where all are contacted).

3.1.5: Data Collection

The DCLG specified a single methodology (postal survey), the means by which respondents were contacted and interviews administered.

DCLG specified two standard fieldwork windows for this project, beginning with an initial mailing to claimants in the first sampling window in early August 2006 and ending in late August 2006. Those appearing in the second sampling window were contacted between early January 2007 and late January 2007.

They also required that two questionnaire reminder mailings be sent to non-respondents, which MRG distributed at three weekly intervals following the initial mailing.

3.1.6: Survey Materials

MRG designed and produced a questionnaire and introductory covering letter for respondents, both of which were based on the standard templates produced by DCLG for this survey.

The questionnaire included all the standard service, opinion and demographic questions required to report performance indicators applicable to the Council, and no additional questions were added. MRG added a unique ID number to each questionnaire sent out to reduce the possibility of duplicate responses and so that non-respondents could be identified and targeted with reminder mailings.

The covering letter introduced the project, its purpose, MRG contacts and Data Protection information. A slightly amended letter was included with repeat mailings of reminder questionnaires.

Provision was also made for those with sensory impairment and those speaking other languages in the form of large print versions, translated versions or telephone interviews. In addition, to encourage a good response each respondent received a freepost return envelope in which to return their completed questionnaire.

3.1.7: Data Processing & Analysis

Upon receipt of the questionnaires, each unique ID number was used to update responses on the sample frame database. This was then used to update the Council of response rates and key demographic breakdowns, and was used as a basis for reminder mailings.

All questionnaires were scanned and checked by MRG, and back-checking exercises conducted if warranted. All open-ended responses were coded with standard numerical tags for ease of analysis and finally all responses were entered into a specialist computer package and combined with the sample frame database.

MRG then produced the tabulated results and data weighting information required.

3.2: Reporting

3.2.1: Council Reporting

The Council received regular fieldwork updates from MRG upon commencement of the project, including the number of responses and key demographic breakdowns. This allowed swift corrective action should any problems be encountered.

MRG also provided the Council with advanced copies of all data and document submissions intended for the Audit Commissions approval. This included a brief methodology, the raw data file and research materials.

Upon completion of these basic requirements, MRG conducted further detailed analysis of the results to satisfy the information requirements of the Council, including cross-tabulations, statistical calculations and benchmarking with historical data and peer organisations.

3.2.2: Central Government Reporting

MRG endeavoured to fulfil all data submissions to the Audit Commission as specified in the Best Value guidance on behalf of the Council.

4: Research Findings

This section of the report discusses the findings of the survey. Specifically, it deals with the results of the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) and questions asked about; contact with the office, visiting and telephoning the office, Benefits Office staff, the claim forms, claim decisions, overall satisfaction with the service and the nature of claimants.

4.1: Best Value Performance Indicators

This section of the findings details the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) results, which in this case relates to overall satisfaction with the service area, and six key elements of the service. The results of these questions are displayed in the following table (*Fig. 1*), with the figure being the proportion of respondents satisfied with each factor.

This year over three quarters (79%) were satisfied to some extent with the overall service provided. Similar proportions were also satisfied with contact with the office (84%), the staff in the office (83%) service in the office (83%) and the telephone service (76%). Less than three quarters were satisfied with the speed of service and the claims forms (73% and 66% respectively).

Fig. 1: Summary Of Overall Satisfaction

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peers (%)
BV80A: Contact With Office	84	84	76
BV80B: Service In The Office	83	84	76
BV80C: Telephone Service	77	76	59
BV80D: Staff In The Office	83	83	81
BV80E: Forms	66	69	62
BV80F: Speed Of Service	73	75	74
BV80G: Overall Satisfaction*	79	84	80

All of these results are on a par or slightly higher than the figures reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year, and although not significant in some cases, there are indications of a general decrease in satisfaction since the 2003 survey.

4.2: Contacting the Office

This section of the findings relates to the general questions asked about claimant contact with the benefits office, including its location, opening hours, contact nature and satisfaction with this aspect of the service.

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about contact with the benefits office.

4.2.1: Office Location

It can be seen that respondents were generally positive about all aspects of getting in touch with the benefit's office.

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent* (83%) that the benefits office is easy to get to. Less than a tenth are ambivalent** (9%) or disagree to some extent*** (8%).

Table 1: The Office Is Easy To Get To (Q1a)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	22.0	21.5	17.3
(2) Agree	61.4	56.0	52.0
(3) Neither	8.9	11.7	16.1
(4) Disagree	6.1	8.6	11.3
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.7	2.2	3.2
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement was higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (69%), and is an improvement on the 2003 survey result (78%).

* The term *agree to some extent* refers to the total number of respondents who strongly agree and agree with the proposed statement.

** In order to reduce wording within the report the term *neither agree nor disagree* is substituted with the word ambivalent.

*** The term *disagree to some extent* refers to the total number of respondents who strongly disagree and disagree with the proposed statement.

4.2.2: Opening Hours

Over a third of respondents agree to some extent (38%) that the benefits office's opening hours are inconvenient. Just over a tenth are ambivalent (13%) whilst nearly half disagree to some extent (49%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.7	5.3	8.4
(2) Agree	31.2	19.4	28.7
(3) Neither	13.4	17.6	17.9
(4) Disagree	42.7	49.8	37.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	5.9	7.8	7.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed in 2006 (38%). The result is less negative than the agreement level reported for 2003 (25%).

4.2.3: Claim sorted by Telephone

Under half of the respondents agree to some extent (46%) that the staff tried to sort out their claim on the phone so they didn't have to come into the office. Around a fifth are ambivalent (19%) and over a third disagree to some extent with this statement (35%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	10.4	9.9	14.2
(2) Agree	35.7	35.0	36.9
(3) Neither	18.9	23.2	15.9
(4) Disagree	25.8	25.8	19.5
(5) Strongly Disagree	9.2	6.1	13.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey result (45%) and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (51%).

4.2.4: Name of Contact Person

Over half of respondents agree to some extent (51%) that they were given the name of a person at the Borough of Poole's benefits office to contact about their claim. Over a third of the respondents disagree to some extent with this statement (37%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	9.5	8.9	8.7
(2) Agree	41.4	38.0	26.6
(3) Neither	11.8	16.1	16.0
(4) Disagree	27.8	29.2	32.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	9.5	8.0	16.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement has increased slightly since the 2003 survey (47%) and is higher than the score reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (35%).

4.2.5: Satisfaction with ways to Contact Benefits Office

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (84%) that they are satisfied with the ways they can contact the benefits office. A tenth or less are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (10% and 6% respectively).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19.7	20.1	20.5
(2) Agree	64.3	63.7	55.6
(3) Neither	10.1	11.2	9.2
(4) Disagree	2.7	4.2	9.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.2	0.9	5.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey result (84%) but it is slightly higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (76%).

4.3: Visiting the Office

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of visiting the benefits office, including the proportion of claimants doing so, and opinions of waiting times, privacy, cleanliness, seating and satisfaction with these elements of the service.

4.3.1: Level of Visits

Just under two thirds of the respondents (63%) had to go to the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim. Over a third (38%) were able to sort out their benefit claim through other means, such as the telephone.

Those respondents visiting the office were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about their visit.

4.3.2: Time taken to see Relevant Person

Around a tenth of the respondents agree to some extent (13%) that they had to wait a long time before they saw the person they needed to. Under a fifth are ambivalent (14%) whilst nearly three quarters disagree to some extent (72%).

Table 7: I Had To Wait A Long Time Before Seeing Person Needed To (Q3a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	3.3	7.3	12.1
(2) Agree	10.1	17.3	26.7
(3) Neither	14.2	15.9	21.4
(4) Disagree	58.8	50.8	31.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	13.6	8.7	8.2
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Respondents are less likely to agree that they had to wait a long time before they saw the person they needed to in 2006 (13%) compared to the respondents surveyed in 2003 (25%). The peer organisation reported a higher level of agreement with the statement (39%).

4.3.3: Private Communication

Just over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (77%) that they could talk to the person they needed to in a private place if they wanted to. Around a tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (10% and 14% respectively).

Table 8: I Could Talk To The Person In Private (Q3b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	14.7	20.7	12.1
(2) Agree	62.0	61.6	50.4
(3) Neither	9.2	10.2	14.7
(4) Disagree	10.6	6.4	15.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.4	1.2	6.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement with this statement has decreased slightly since 2003 (82%), but is higher than the agreement result reported by the peer organisation (63%).

4.3.4: Clean and Tidy Office

The vast majority of respondents agree to some extent (92%) that the benefits office was clean and tidy. Very few respondents are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (5% and 3% respectively).

Table 9: The Office Was Clean & Tidy (Q3c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19.8	23.8	24.7
(2) Agree	71.7	67.2	65.4
(3) Neither	5.3	6.7	5.3
(4) Disagree	2.7	2.1	3.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	0.6	0.2	1.4
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 and peer organisation survey results (91% and 90% respectively).

4.3.5: Number of Seats

A fifth of the respondents agree to some extent (20%) that more seats are needed in their benefits office, whilst over half disagree to some extent (59%).

Table 10: More Seats Are Needed In The Office (Q3d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	2.2	4.2	24.7
(2) Agree	9.9	10.7	65.4
(3) Neither	28.9	31.1	5.3
(4) Disagree	50.6	48.9	3.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	8.4	5.1	1.4
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

More respondents surveyed this year agree that more seats are needed (20%) compared to the 2003 survey result (15%).

4.3.6: Satisfaction with Visiting the Benefits Office

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (83%) that they are satisfied with the experience of visiting the benefits office. Less than a tenth disagree to some extent (7%).

Table 11: Satisfied Overall With Visiting The Office (Q3e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (300)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19.2	23.5	18.5
(2) Agree	63.7	60.5	57.8
(3) Neither	10.6	11.0	11.1
(4) Disagree	4.1	3.8	9.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	2.4	1.2	3.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement is on par with the 2003 survey result (84%) but is higher than the peer organisation (76%) survey result.

4.4: Telephoning the office

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of telephoning the benefits office, including the proportion of claimants doing so, opinions of answering times, transfers, their ability to contact the correct member of staff, dealing with their query and satisfaction with these elements of the service.

4.4.1: Level of Calls

Over a third of the respondents (39%) telephoned the Council's benefits office when they made their most recent claim compared to just under two thirds (61%) who did not.

4.4.2: Answering of Telephone Call

Over half of the respondents agree to some extent (65%) that the telephone call they made to the benefits office was answered quickly whilst under half disagree to some extent (41%).

Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	15.6	16.7	9.0
(2) Agree	65.8	62.5	44.4
(3) Neither	10.6	6.5	5.4
(4) Disagree	6.0	11.3	16.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	2.0	3.0	24.7
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The level of agreement has decreased since the 2003 survey (79%) but is higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (53%).

4.4.3: Transfer of Telephone Call

A third of respondents agree to some extent (33%) that when they made a call to the benefits office they were transferred between several different people. Over half disagree to some extent with this statement (54%).

Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	4.2	6.6	8.9
(2) Agree	28.9	34.5	23.6
(3) Neither	13.2	9.3	14.8
(4) Disagree	50.0	42.9	45.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.7	6.8	6.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents being transferred has decreased since 2003 (41%) and is on par with the survey result reported by the peer organisation (33%),

4.4.4: Dealing with Query

Nearly three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (74%) that once their call had been answered their query was dealt with quickly. Under a fifth disagree to some extent (17%).

Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	14.6	14.3	11.1
(2) Agree	59.1	58.9	53.7
(3) Neither	9.6	9.4	12.5
(4) Disagree	11.6	14.4	11.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	5.1	3.0	11.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that their query was dealt with quickly has remained the same since 2003 (73%). Respondents from the peer organisation surveyed were less likely to agree that their query was dealt with quickly (65%).

4.4.5: Contact with Member of Staff

Under a fifth of the respondents agree to some extent (19%) that when they called the benefits office it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff. Just under two thirds disagree to some extent (27%).

Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.4	6.0	8.9
(2) Agree	12.8	19.4	18.3
(3) Neither	17.6	17.1	16.8
(4) Disagree	55.1	48.0	47.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	8.0	9.6	8.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that it was difficult to speak with the right member of staff has decreased since 2003 (25%).

4.4.6: Satisfaction with Telephone Service

Just over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (77%) that they are satisfied with the telephone service provided by the benefits office. A tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (11% respectively).

Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (235)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	20.8	19.8	15.8
(2) Agree	56.4	56.2	43.7
(3) Neither	11.4	11.1	9.9
(4) Disagree	6.4	9.7	14.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	5.0	3.2	15.8
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that they are satisfied with the telephone service is on par with the 2003 survey result (76%) and is higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (60%).

4.5: Benefits Office Staff

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of staff in the benefits office, including friendliness, confidence in the information given, their explanations, ability to ask questions, their perceived workload, their treatment of claimants and satisfaction with these aspects of the service.

All respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about staff in the Council's benefits office.

4.5.1: Friendly Staff

A large proportion of the respondents agree to some extent (86%) that staff in the benefits office were friendly. Less than a tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (9% and 5% each).

Table 18: The Staff In The Office Are Friendly (Q6a)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	23.3	26.6	23.2
(2) Agree	62.8	61.6	59.0
(3) Neither	9.2	9.1	8.7
(4) Disagree	4.2	2.3	7.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	0.6	0.4	1.8
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that the staff in the benefits office are friendly is on par with the 2003 survey result (88%) and is slightly higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (82%).

4.5.2: Confidence in Staff

Under a third of respondents agree to some extent (29%) that they were not always confident that what the staff told them was correct. Over half disagree with the statement (55%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.1	7.5	6.8
(2) Agree	18.7	20.6	22.6
(3) Neither	20.8	22.0	18.8
(4) Disagree	44.0	44.0	39.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	10.5	5.9	12.0
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree that they were not always confident that what the staff told them was correct is on par with the 2003 survey result (28%) and with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (30%).

4.5.3: Understanding of Staff Explanations

Over three quarters of the respondents agree to some extent (80%) that things were explained in a way that they could understand whilst around a tenth are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (11% and 9% respectively).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	15.7	17.2	16.6
(2) Agree	64.6	62.5	58.5
(3) Neither	11.1	12.4	12.7
(4) Disagree	6.7	7.1	8.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.9	0.7	3.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the 2003 survey result (80%) and by those responding to the peer organisation survey for 2006 (75%).

4.5.4: Asking Questions

Under a fifth of respondents agree to some extent (15%) that they felt unable to ask the questions they wanted to whilst nearly three quarters disagree to some extent (73%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	3.7	2.6	6.0
(2) Agree	11.4	9.4	17.3
(3) Neither	11.7	16.9	16.9
(4) Disagree	61.3	60.6	48.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	11.9	10.5	11.1
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent with the statement has decreased since 2003 (12%) and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation (23%).

4.5.5: Staff in a Rush

A tenth of the respondents agree to some extent that staff were in a rush (10%). Over three quarters disagree to some extent (77%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	2.3	2.1	3.5
(2) Agree	7.2	10.5	10.7
(3) Neither	13.9	17.0	16.0
(4) Disagree	61.8	58.7	57.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	14.7	11.7	12.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that staff were in a rush has decreased since 2003 (13%), and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation (14%).

4.5.6: Respect of Staff

A large proportion of respondents agree to some extent that staff treated them with respect (84%). Very few disagree to any extent with the statement (5%).

Table 23: The Staff Treated People With Respect (Q6f)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	22.2	22.7	23.3
(2) Agree	62.0	60.2	59.0
(3) Neither	10.6	12.5	11.4
(4) Disagree	4.2	3.6	4.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.0	0.9	2.3
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the 2003 survey result (83%), and the figure provided by the peer organisation surveyed this year (82%).

4.5.7: Satisfaction with Service Provided

A large proportion of respondents agree to some extent (83%) that they are satisfied with the service provided by staff in the benefits office. Less than a tenth were dissatisfied to some extent (6%).

Table 24: Satisfied Overall With The Staff Service (Q6g)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	23.6	24.8	23.5
(2) Agree	59.8	60.3	57.5
(3) Neither	10.9	9.8	10.6
(4) Disagree	4.2	4.0	4.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	1.5	1.2	3.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that they are satisfied with the service provided by staff is on par with the 2003 and peer organisation figure (83% and 81% respectively).

4.6: Benefits Claim Forms

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about experiences of completing forms to claim benefits, including the claimant's opinions of filling in the form, accompanying information, letters and satisfaction with these elements of the service.

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements about the forms used to claim benefits.

4.6.1: Filling in the Claim Form

Around a third of respondents agree to some extent (34%) that the Housing/Council Tax benefits form was difficult to fill in. Just over a fifth are ambivalent (22%) and under half disagree to some extent (44%).

Table 25: The Claim Form Was Difficult To Fill In (Q7a)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	8.5	9.9	11.0
(2) Agree	25.0	25.2	23.9
(3) Neither	22.3	23.0	26.1
(4) Disagree	40.7	38.5	35.4
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.4	3.3	3.7
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent with the statement is on par with the 2003 and peer organisation figure for this year (35% and 34% respectively).

4.6.2: Time Taken to Fill in the Claim Form

Under half of the respondents agree to some extent (42%) that they could fill in the form quickly. Under a fifth are ambivalent (18%) and under half disagree to some extent (40%).

Table 26: I Could Fill The Form In Quickly (Q7b)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	4.7	5.3	4.5
(2) Agree	36.9	34.2	31.9
(3) Neither	18.8	22.1	26.7
(4) Disagree	32.2	32.4	29.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	7.4	6.0	7.6
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent with the statement is on par with the figure reported in 2003 (40%) and is higher than the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (37%).

4.6.3: Information with Form

Two thirds of the respondents agree to some extent (66%) that the information supplied with the form was helpful. Just over a fifth are ambivalent (21%) and around a tenth disagree to some extent (13%).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	6.1	9.0	7.0
(2) Agree	60.1	53.3	60.6
(3) Neither	21.1	26.8	21.5
(4) Disagree	10.0	9.6	8.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	2.8	1.3	2.3
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement has increased since 2003 (62%) and is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (68%).

4.6.4: Claim Letter

Around a third of the respondents agree to some extent (31%) that the letters sent about their claim were difficult to understand. Around half (51%) disagree to some extent with this statement.

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	9.8	8.7	10.8
(2) Agree	21.5	22.0	26.1
(3) Neither	18.1	21.6	19.0
(4) Disagree	44.3	42.4	39.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	6.3	5.3	4.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree with the statement is on par with the figure reported for 2003 (31%) and is lower than the figure reported by the peer organisation (37%).

4.6.5: Satisfaction with Housing/Council Tax Claim Form

Around two thirds of the respondents agree to some extent (66%) that they are satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form. A fifth or less are ambivalent or disagree to some extent (20% and 14% respectively).

Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	12.6	14.3	9.6
(2) Agree	53.0	54.6	52.5
(3) Neither	20.0	18.2	20.9
(4) Disagree	10.9	9.9	12.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	3.5	3.0	4.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The number of respondents who agree to some extent that they are satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form is slightly lower than the figure reported for 2003 (69%) but is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (62%).

4.7: Claim Decision

This section of the findings relates to the questions asked about the claim decision, including the outcome of their last claim and satisfaction with the length of time it took to inform them of this decision.

4.7.1: Outcome of Claim

The vast majority (93%) of claims was successful and a small proportion (7%) were unsuccessful. The number of successful and unsuccessful claims is similar to the 2003 survey results and the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year.

Table 30: Outcome Of Most Recent Claim (Q10)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Successful	93.2	95.1	96.1
(2) Unsuccessful	6.8	4.9	3.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.7.2: Speed of Claim Decision

Around three quarters (73%) were satisfied to some extent with the time taken to make a decision on their claim. Just under a fifth (17%) reported dissatisfaction to some extent, whilst the remaining tenth (10%) are ambivalent.

Table 31: Satisfaction With The Time Taken Make A Decision On Your Claim (Q8)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	33.7	35.7	35.7
(2) Fairly Satisfied	39.6	39.1	38.3
(3) Neither	9.5	10.2	8.7
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	11.0	8.4	9.9
(5) Very Dissatisfied	6.2	6.7	7.5
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The overall level of satisfaction is on par with the figure reported in 2003 (75%) and the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (74%).

4.8: Overall Satisfaction

This section of the findings relates to overall satisfaction amongst claimants with the service provided by the benefits office.

Over three quarters (79%) were satisfied to some extent with the service provided by the benefits office. A tenth (11%) reported dissatisfaction to some extent, whilst the remaining tenth (10%) are ambivalent.

Table 32: Satisfaction With The Overall Service Received From The Office (Q9)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	41.2	41.3	39.3
(2) Fairly Satisfied	38.2	42.3	40.5
(3) Neither	10.0	8.6	10.1
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	6.1	5.1	6.3
(5) Very Dissatisfied	4.5	2.6	3.9
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

The overall level of satisfaction has decreased slightly since 2003 (84%) but is on par with the figure reported by the peer organisation surveyed this year (80%).

4.9: Service Improvements

This section of the findings relates to the question asked about the improvements required to the benefits service, encompassing those aspects of the service outlined previously.

Around a quarter of respondents think that the areas of the service most in need of improvement are the time taken to make a decision on a claim for Housing/Council Tax benefit (27%) and the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form (20%). Relatively few thought that other areas of the service needed improving and just over a tenth (14%) thought none of these needed improvement.

Table 33: Aspect Of Service In Most Need Of Improvement (Q11)			
Base: All Respondents (690)	2006 (%)	2003 (%)	Peer (%)
(1) Ways Can Contact Office	2.8	2.5	4.8
(2) Experience Of Visiting Office	1.9	5.9	4.0
(3) Telephone Service	5.1	6.4	13.2
(4) Staff Service In The Office	3.0	4.0	2.3
(5) Benefits Claim Form	20.0	31.2	14.5
(6) Time It Take To Know Outcome	27.2	26.8	20.4
(7) Other (Please Specify)	26.1	9.9	8.0
(8) None Of These	14.0	13.2	32.7
Total (Valid)	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.10: Other Comments & Suggestions

This section of the findings deals with the other relevant comments and suggestions submitted by respondents. In the event 93 of the respondents chose to do so.

These comments were varied; the most common theme related to satisfaction with the service and staff of the benefits office (40%) and improved communication/Information/Form (19%).

A full table of responses and the verbatim comments from which the table is derived can be found in the appendices.

4.11: Nature of Claimants

This section of the findings briefly outlines the profile of benefits claimants so that the Council may better understand their nature. More specifically, it details their gender, ages, length of residence, employment status, disabilities and ethnic background.

Over half (57%) of respondents were female and under half (40%) were male. The average age of applicants was 53 years. Small numbers considered themselves part of an ethnic minority group (2%).

Around a third of respondents reported being wholly retired from work (32%) whilst under a fifth reported being permanently sick/disabled, an employee in a part-time job, looking after the home or an employee in a full-time job (14%, 14%, 12% and 11% respectively). Most of the remaining were unemployed and available for work, doing something else, self employed, on a government supported training scheme or in full time education (7%, 6% and 3%, 1% and 1% respectively).

Over half of the respondents (51%) reported having a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity compared to under half (49%) who said that they did not.

Half (51%) said that they have lived in the area for 21+ years, under a fifth (16%) for 11-20 years and a tenth (10%) for under 1 year. A small proportion said that they had lived in the area for 3-5 years, 6-10 years and 1-2 years (9%, 8% and 7% respectively).

5: Conclusions & Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations have been drawn from the research findings section of this report.

5.1: Best Value Performance Indicator

- There are indications that the performance score has decreased slightly since 2003. It is also par with the peer organisation surveyed this year.
- This information will be submitted to DCLG for consideration and national comparison.

5.2: The Benefits Service

- A vast majority of the claimants were successful in their application.
- However, the council could look at improving the letter and form so that it is easier and quicker for claimants to fill in.
- A large proportion of the claimants reported being wholly retired from work or permanently sick or disabled. The council should look into ways of reducing the waiting time. One way would be to deal with more claims through other means, such as the telephone.

5.3: Information & Communications

- Whilst claimants were generally satisfied with the service, there are a number of areas where respondents believe further improvements are possible.
- Communication is an area that was rated less positively in some cases. The council may wish to investigate its current methods of helping and keeping applicants informed about their claim and improving areas of the telephone service.

5.4: Further Research

- Further qualitative or internal consultation would help to identify the information required to improve the areas of the Councils benefits office which claimants are less satisfied with.

6: Appendices

6.1: Survey Questionnaire & Letter



Listening to your views

Dear ,

August 2006

I am writing to ask for your help in improving the service you receive from the Borough of Poole's Council's Benefits Office (where you make claims for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit).

We'd like to hear your views about the various aspects of the service you receive from the Benefits Office so that we can monitor those services and take steps to improve the services we provide.

You have been chosen to receive this questionnaire at random from a list of all residents who have made a claim for Housing and/or Council Tax Benefits in the last few months. We'd like to hear about your experience of claiming that benefit.

It does not matter whether you are still receiving benefit or not because it is important that we hear the views of all who have recently had contact with the Benefits Office.

All of your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used to monitor the local authority's services. **The answers you give will have no relevance to any claims you make for benefits and will not be linked in any way to you as an individual.** Anonymised responses may be passed on to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) so that national patterns of service satisfaction can be studied.

To ensure the objectivity of these results, and the confidentiality of your personal views, the Council have asked the Market Research Group (MRG) to undertake this survey on their behalf. They adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Market Research Society (MRS) code of conduct, both of which seek to protect respondents.

If you have any questions or concerns about this survey please do not hesitate to contact Eva Makris at MRG on (01202) 963885 or emakris@bournemouth.ac.uk, who will be very happy to help you.

I very much hope you will be able to take part as your views are very important to the local authority. Thank you very much for your help in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Hudson,
Acting Head of Benefits.

If you require a large print or foreign language version please call
Eva Makris on (01202) 963885.

Confidential

ID:

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BOROUGH OF POOLE BENEFITS SURVEY 2006

Helpful hints for completing this questionnaire

- The questionnaire should be completed by the resident to whom it is addressed.
- Please read each question carefully and tick a box to indicate your answer.
- In most cases you will only have to tick one box but please read the questions carefully as sometimes you will need to tick more than one box.
- Answer the next question unless asked otherwise.
- Once you have finished please take a minute to check you have answered all the questions that you should have answered.
- The survey consists of 8 pages and should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- If you have any queries about the questionnaire please do not hesitate to contact Eva Makris at the Market Research Group on emakris@bournemouth.ac.uk or (01202) 963885.
- Once you have completed the questionnaire please return in the pre-addressed envelope supplied by 30th september 2006. You do not need to add a stamp.

If you cannot find or did not receive the pre-addressed envelope please send to The Market Research Group Freepost (BH1 826) PO BOX 3471 Poole BH12 5ZZ or call Eva Makris at the Market Research Group.

Section 1: Getting in touch with the benefits office

Q1 Thinking about your last housing/council tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements
Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) The local authority benefits office is somewhere that is easy for me to get to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) The local authority benefits office's opening hours are inconvenient for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Staff tried to sort out my claim on the phone so I didn't have to go into the office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) I was given the name of a person at the local authority benefits office to contact about my claim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2: Visiting your local benefits office

Q2 Did you go to your local authority benefits office when you made your most recent claim?
Please tick ✓one box only

Yes..... **Go to Q3** No..... **Go to Q4**

IF YOU WENT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BENEFITS OFFICE WHEN YOU MADE YOUR MOST RECENT CLAIM, PLEASE CONTINUE TO QUESTION 3, OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION 4

Q3 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the visit(s) you made to the local authority benefits office
Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) I had to wait a long time before I saw the person I needed to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) I could talk with this person in a private place if I wanted to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) The local authority benefits office was "clean and tidy".	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) More seats are needed in my local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Telephoning your local benefits office

Q4 Did you telephone your local authority benefits office when you made your most recent claim?

Please tick ✓one box only

Yes..... Go to Q5

No..... Go to Q6

IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' PLEASE CONTINUE TO QUESTION 5, OTHERWISE PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6

Q5 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) The telephone call I made to the local authority benefits office was answered quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) When I made a call to the local authority benefits office I was transferred between several different people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Once the call to my local authority benefits office had been answered, my query was dealt with swiftly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) When I called the local authority benefits office it was difficult to speak to the right member of staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by my local authority benefit office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: The staff in your local benefits office

Q6 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) Staff in the local authority benefits office were friendly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) I was not always confident that what the staff said was correct.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) Things were explained in a way I could understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) I felt I was unable to ask the questions I wanted to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Staff were in a rush.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F) Staff treated me with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G) Overall, I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in my local authority benefits office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5: The forms you fill in to claim benefits

Q7 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements
Please tick ✓one box per row

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It does not apply/ Don't know
A) The Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form was difficult to fill in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) I could fill in the form quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) The information that came with the form was helpful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) The letters sent about my claim were difficult to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) Overall, I am satisfied with the Housing/Council Tax benefits claim form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 6: Your benefits claim overall

How quickly is your claim sorted out?

Q8 Thinking about your last Housing/Council Tax benefit claim, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the amount of time it took to tell whether your claim for Housing/Council Tax benefit was successful or not?
Please tick ✓one box per row

Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The overall service from your local benefits office

Q9 Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you receive from the local authority benefits office?
Please tick ✓one box per row

Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The success of your last benefits claim

Q10 Was your claim successful or unsuccessful?
Please tick ✓ one box only

Successful Unsuccessful Don't know
.....

What needs improving?

Q11 Thinking about the overall service you receive from the local authority benefits office, which one of the list below do you think most needs improving
Please tick ✓ one box only

- The ways in which I can contact the local authority benefits office.....
- The experience of visiting the local authority benefits office.....
- The telephone service provided by the local authority benefits office
- The staff service in the local authority benefits office
- The Housing/ Council Tax benefits claim form
- The time it takes to tell me whether my claim for Housing/ Council Tax benefit was successful
- Nothing.....
- Don't know
- Other (✓ and write in below).....

Section 7: About Yourself

ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE REQUIRED. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT ALL RESPONSES ARE ANONYMOUS AND WILL NOT BE LINKED IN ANY WAY TO YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

Q12 Are you male or female?
Please tick ✓one box only

Male..... Female.....

Q13 What was your age in years on your last birthday?
Please write in

| | |

Q14 How long have you/your household been living in your current accommodation?
Please tick ✓one box only

Under 1 year..... 11-20 years.....
 1-2 years..... 21+ years.....
 3-5 years..... Don't know/can't remember.....
 6-10 years.....

Q15 How long have you/your household been living in this area?
Please tick ✓one box only

Under 1 year..... 11-20 years.....
 1-2 years..... 21+ years.....
 3-5 years..... Don't know/can't remember.....
 6-10 years.....

Q16 In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation?
Please tick ✓one box only

Owned outright..... Rent from Housing Association/
 Buying on mortgage..... Trust.....
 Rent from council..... Rented from private landlord.....
 Other (✓ and write in below).....

Q17 How many adults aged 18 or over are living here?
Please tick ✓one box only

One..... Five.....
 Two..... More than five (✓ and write in
 Three..... below).....
 Four.....

Q18 Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?
Please tick ✓one box only

- Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)
- Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)
- Self employed full or part-time
- On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship/
 Training for Work)
- Full-time education at school, college or university
- Unemployed and available for work.....
- Permanently sick/disabled.....
- Wholly retired from work.....
- Looking after the home.....
- Doing something else (✓ and write in below).....

Q19 Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? (long-standing means anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time)

Please tick ✓one box only

- Yes..... **Go to Q20** No **Go to Q21**

Q20 Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?

Please tick ✓one box only

- Yes No

Continued over...

Q21 To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (tick ✓ one box only)

White

British

Irish

Any other white background (✓ and write in below)

Mixed

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background (✓ and write in below)

Chinese

Chinese

Black or Black British

Caribbean

African

Any other black background (✓ and write in below)

Asian or Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background (✓ and write in below)

Other

Other ethnic group (✓ and write in below)

Q22 Is there anything else you would like to add?
Please write in below

Thank you for taking part in the survey.

Please return your questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided or to:
The Market Research Group Freepost (BH1 826) PO BOX 3471 Poole BH12 5ZZ

Please return your questionnaire by the 18th August 2006

6.2: Survey Tabulations

6.2.1: Frequency & Demographic Tabulations

The following data tables show the frequency tabulations and demographic profile of respondents. Due to the general accuracy of this profile, and the DCLG guidance document specifications, it was decided not to employ data weighting techniques.

Table 1: The Office Is Easy To Get To (Q1a)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	119	19.6	22.0
(2) Agree	333	54.8	61.4
(3) Neither	48	7.9	8.9
(4) Disagree	33	5.4	6.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	9	1.5	1.7
Total (Valid)	542	89.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	66	10.9	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	452	74.3	83.4
(3) Middle Box	48	7.9	8.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	42	6.9	7.7

Table 2: The Office's Opening Hours Are Inconvenient (Q1b)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	35	5.8	6.7
(2) Agree	163	26.8	31.2
(3) Neither	70	11.5	13.4
(4) Disagree	223	36.7	42.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	31	5.1	5.9
Total (Valid)	522	85.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	86	14.1	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	198	32.6	37.9
(3) Middle Box	70	11.5	13.4
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	254	41.8	48.7

Table 3: The Staff Tried To Sort Out My Claim Over The Phone (Q1c)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	42	6.9	10.4
(2) Agree	144	23.7	35.7
(3) Neither	76	12.5	18.9
(4) Disagree	104	17.1	25.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	37	6.1	9.2
Total (Valid)	403	66.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	205	33.7	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	186	30.6	46.2
(3) Middle Box	76	12.5	18.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	141	23.2	35.0

Table 4: Given The Name Of A Person To Contact About Claim (Q1d)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	42	6.9	9.5
(2) Agree	183	30.1	41.4
(3) Neither	52	8.6	11.8
(4) Disagree	123	20.2	27.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	42	6.9	9.5
Total (Valid)	442	72.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	166	27.3	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	225	37.0	50.9
(3) Middle Box	52	8.6	11.8
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	165	27.1	37.3

Table 5: Satisfaction With Contacting The Office (Q1e)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	111	18.3	19.7
(2) Agree	362	59.5	64.3
(3) Neither	57	9.4	10.1
(4) Disagree	15	2.5	2.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	18	3.0	3.2
Total (Valid)	563	92.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	45	7.4	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	473	77.8	84.0
(3) Middle Box	57	9.4	10.1
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	33	5.4	5.9

Table 6: I Went Into The Office When Making Most Recent Claim (Q2)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	352	57.9	62.5
(2) No	211	34.7	37.5
Total (Valid)	563	92.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	45	7.4	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 7: I Had To Wait A Long Time Before Seeing Person Needed To (Q3a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (352)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	11	3.1	3.3
(2) Agree	34	9.7	10.1
(3) Neither	48	13.6	14.2
(4) Disagree	198	56.3	58.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	46	13.1	13.6
Total (Valid)	337	95.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	15	4.3	N/A
Total (Base)	352	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	45	12.8	13.4
(3) Middle Box	48	13.6	14.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	244	69.3	72.4

Table 8: I Could Talk To The Person In Private (Q3b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (352)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	43	12.2	14.7
(2) Agree	181	51.4	62.0
(3) Neither	27	7.7	9.2
(4) Disagree	31	8.8	10.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	10	2.8	3.4
Total (Valid)	292	83.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	60	17.0	N/A
Total (Base)	352	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	224	63.6	76.7
(3) Middle Box	27	7.7	9.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	41	11.6	14.0

Table 9: The Office Was Clean & Tidy (Q3c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (352)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	67	19.0	19.8
(2) Agree	243	69.0	71.7
(3) Neither	18	5.1	5.3
(4) Disagree	9	2.6	2.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	2	0.6	0.6
Total (Valid)	339	96.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	13	3.7	N/A
Total (Base)	352	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	310	88.1	91.4
(3) Middle Box	18	5.1	5.3
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	11	3.1	3.2

Table 10: More Seats Are Needed In The Office (Q3d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (352)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	7	2.0	2.2
(2) Agree	32	9.1	9.9
(3) Neither	93	26.4	28.9
(4) Disagree	163	46.3	50.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	27	7.7	8.4
Total (Valid)	322	91.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	30	8.5	N/A
Total (Base)	352	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	39	11.1	12.1
(3) Middle Box	93	26.4	28.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	190	54.0	59.0

Table 11: Satisfied Overall With Visiting The Office (Q3e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (352)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	65	18.5	19.2
(2) Agree	216	61.4	63.7
(3) Neither	36	10.2	10.6
(4) Disagree	14	4.0	4.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	8	2.3	2.4
Total (Valid)	339	96.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	13	3.7	N/A
Total (Base)	352	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	281	79.8	82.9
(3) Middle Box	36	10.2	10.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	22	6.3	6.5

Table 12: I Telephoned The Office When Making Most Recent Claim (Q4)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	212	34.9	38.8
(2) No	334	54.9	61.2
Total (Valid)	546	89.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	62	10.2	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 13: The Call Was Answered Quickly (Q5a)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (212)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	31	14.6	15.6
(2) Agree	131	61.8	65.8
(3) Neither	21	9.9	10.6
(4) Disagree	12	5.7	6.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	4	1.9	2.0
Total (Valid)	199	93.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	13	6.1	N/A
Total (Base)	212	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	162	76.4	81.4
(3) Middle Box	21	9.9	10.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	16	7.5	8.0

Table 14: The Call Was Transferred Between Several People (Q5b)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (212)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	8	3.8	4.2
(2) Agree	55	25.9	28.9
(3) Neither	25	11.8	13.2
(4) Disagree	95	44.8	50.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	7	3.3	3.7
Total (Valid)	190	89.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	22	10.4	N/A
Total (Base)	212	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	63	29.7	33.2
(3) Middle Box	25	11.8	13.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	102	48.1	53.7

Table 15: My Query Was Dealt With Quickly (Q5c)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (212)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	29	13.7	14.6
(2) Agree	117	55.2	59.1
(3) Neither	19	9.0	9.6
(4) Disagree	23	10.8	11.6
(5) Strongly Disagree	10	4.7	5.1
Total (Valid)	198	93.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	14	6.6	N/A
Total (Base)	212	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	146	68.9	73.7
(3) Middle Box	19	9.0	9.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	33	15.6	16.7

Table 16: It Was Difficult To Speak To The Right Person (Q5d)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (212)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	12	5.7	6.4
(2) Agree	24	11.3	12.8
(3) Neither	33	15.6	17.6
(4) Disagree	103	48.6	55.1
(5) Strongly Disagree	15	7.1	8.0
Total (Valid)	187	88.2	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	25	11.8	N/A
Total (Base)	212	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	36	17.0	19.3
(3) Middle Box	33	15.6	17.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	118	55.7	63.1

Table 17: Satisfied Overall With Telephoning The Office (Q5e)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q2 (212)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	42	19.8	20.8
(2) Agree	114	53.8	56.4
(3) Neither	23	10.8	11.4
(4) Disagree	13	6.1	6.4
(5) Strongly Disagree	10	4.7	5.0
Total (Valid)	202	95.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	10	4.7	N/A
Total (Base)	212	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	156	73.6	77.2
(3) Middle Box	23	10.8	11.4
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	23	10.8	11.4

Table 18: Staff In The Office Are Friendly (Q6a)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	127	20.9	23.3
(2) Agree	342	56.3	62.8
(3) Neither	50	8.2	9.2
(4) Disagree	23	3.8	4.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	3	0.5	0.6
Total (Valid)	545	89.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	63	10.4	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	469	77.1	86.1
(3) Middle Box	50	8.2	9.2
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	26	4.3	4.8

Table 19: I Wasn't Confident That What Staff Said Was Correct (Q6b)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	32	5.3	6.1
(2) Agree	98	16.1	18.7
(3) Neither	109	17.9	20.8
(4) Disagree	231	38.0	44.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	55	9.0	10.5
Total (Valid)	525	86.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	83	13.7	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	130	21.4	24.8
(3) Middle Box	109	17.9	20.8
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	286	47.0	54.5

Table 20: Things Were Explained In An Understandable Way (Q6c)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	82	13.5	15.7
(2) Agree	337	55.4	64.6
(3) Neither	58	9.5	11.1
(4) Disagree	35	5.8	6.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	10	1.6	1.9
Total (Valid)	522	85.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	86	14.1	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	419	68.9	80.3
(3) Middle Box	58	9.5	11.1
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	45	7.4	8.6

Table 21: I Felt Able To Ask Questions (Q6d)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	19	3.1	3.7
(2) Agree	58	9.5	11.4
(3) Neither	60	9.9	11.7
(4) Disagree	313	51.5	61.3
(5) Strongly Disagree	61	10.0	11.9
Total (Valid)	511	84.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	97	16.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	77	12.7	15.1
(3) Middle Box	60	9.9	11.7
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	374	61.5	73.2

Table 22: Staff Were In A Rush (Q6e)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	12	2.0	2.3
(2) Agree	37	6.1	7.2
(3) Neither	71	11.7	13.9
(4) Disagree	316	52.0	61.8
(5) Strongly Disagree	75	12.3	14.7
Total (Valid)	511	84.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	97	16.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	49	8.1	9.6
(3) Middle Box	71	11.7	13.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	391	64.3	76.5

Table 23: Staff Treated People With Respect (Q6f)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	117	19.2	22.2
(2) Agree	326	53.6	62.0
(3) Neither	56	9.2	10.6
(4) Disagree	22	3.6	4.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	5	0.8	1.0
Total (Valid)	526	86.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	82	13.5	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	443	72.9	84.2
(3) Middle Box	56	9.2	10.6
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	27	4.4	5.1

Table 24: Satisfied Overall With The Staff Service (Q6g)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	128	21.1	23.6
(2) Agree	324	53.3	59.8
(3) Neither	59	9.7	10.9
(4) Disagree	23	3.8	4.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	8	1.3	1.5
Total (Valid)	542	89.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	66	10.9	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	452	74.3	83.4
(3) Middle Box	59	9.7	10.9
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	31	5.1	5.7

Table 25: The Claim Form Was Difficult To Fill In (Q7a)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	45	7.4	8.5
(2) Agree	132	21.7	25.0
(3) Neither	118	19.4	22.3
(4) Disagree	215	35.4	40.7
(5) Strongly Disagree	18	3.0	3.4
Total (Valid)	528	86.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	80	13.2	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	177	29.1	33.5
(3) Middle Box	118	19.4	22.3
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	233	38.3	44.1

Table 26: I Could Fill The Form In Quickly (Q7b)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	25	4.1	4.7
(2) Agree	195	32.1	36.9
(3) Neither	99	16.3	18.8
(4) Disagree	170	28.0	32.2
(5) Strongly Disagree	39	6.4	7.4
Total (Valid)	528	86.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	80	13.2	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	220	36.2	41.7
(3) Middle Box	99	16.3	18.8
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	209	34.4	39.6

Table 27: The Information That Came With The Form Was Helpful (Q7c)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	33	5.4	6.1
(2) Agree	325	53.5	60.1
(3) Neither	114	18.8	21.1
(4) Disagree	54	8.9	10.0
(5) Strongly Disagree	15	2.5	2.8
Total (Valid)	541	89.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	67	11.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	358	58.9	66.2
(3) Middle Box	114	18.8	21.1
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	69	11.3	12.8

Table 28: The Letters Sent Were Difficult To Understand (Q7d)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	53	8.7	9.8
(2) Agree	116	19.1	21.5
(3) Neither	98	16.1	18.1
(4) Disagree	239	39.3	44.3
(5) Strongly Disagree	34	5.6	6.3
Total (Valid)	540	88.8	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	68	11.2	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	169	27.8	31.3
(3) Middle Box	98	16.1	18.1
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	273	44.9	50.6

Table 29: Satisfied Overall With The Claim Form (Q7e)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Strongly Agree	69	11.3	12.6
(2) Agree	291	47.9	53.0
(3) Neither	110	18.1	20.0
(4) Disagree	60	9.9	10.9
(5) Strongly Disagree	19	3.1	3.5
Total (Valid)	549	90.3	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	59	9.7	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	360	59.2	65.6
(3) Middle Box	110	18.1	20.0
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	79	13.0	14.4

Table 30: Satisfaction With The Time Taken Make A Decision On Your Claim (Q8)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	202	33.2	33.7
(2) Fairly Satisfied	237	39.0	39.6
(3) Neither	57	9.4	9.5
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	66	10.9	11.0
(5) Very Dissatisfied	37	6.1	6.2
Total (Valid)	599	98.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	9	1.5	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	439	72.2	73.3
(3) Middle Box	57	9.4	9.5
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	103	16.9	17.2

Table 31: Satisfaction With The Overall Service Received From The Office (Q9)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Very Satisfied	248	40.8	41.2
(2) Fairly Satisfied	230	37.8	38.2
(3) Neither	60	9.9	10.0
(4) Fairly Dissatisfied	37	6.1	6.1
(5) Very Dissatisfied	27	4.4	4.5
Total (Valid)	602	99.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	6	1.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
(1&2) Top Two Boxes	478	78.6	79.4
(3) Middle Box	60	9.9	10.0
(4&5) Bottom Two Boxes	64	10.5	10.6

Table 32: Outcome Of Most Recent Claim (Q10)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Successful	521	85.7	93.2
(2) Unsuccessful	38	6.3	6.8
Total (Valid)	559	91.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	49	8.1	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 33: Aspect Of Service In Most Need Of Improvement (Q11)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Ways Can Contact Office	13	2.1	2.8
(2) Experience Of Visiting Office	9	1.5	1.9
(3) Telephone Service	24	3.9	5.1
(4) Staff Service In The Office	14	2.3	3.0
(5) Benefits Claim Form	94	15.5	20.0
(6) Time It Take To Know Outcome	128	21.1	27.2
(7) Other (Please Specify)	123	20.2	26.1
(8) None Of These	66	10.9	14.0
Total (Valid)	471	77.5	100.0
(0) Missing Values	137	22.5	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 34: Other Aspects Of The Service Requiring Improvement (Q11o)			
Base: 'Other' @ Q11 (123)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
Improve Communication/Information/Form	36	29.3	39.6
Satisfied with benefits office	12	9.8	13.2
Unsatisfied with staff	10	8.1	11.0
Reduce claim time	9	7.3	9.9
Improve telephone system	7	5.7	7.7
Other	17	13.8	18.7
Total (Valid)	91	74.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	32	26.0	N/A
Total (Base)	123	100.0	N/A

Table 35: Respondent Gender (Q12)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Male	241	39.6	41.1
(2) Female	345	56.7	58.9
Total (Valid)	586	96.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values	22	3.6	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 36: Respondent Age Group (Q13)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) 18-24 Years	22	3.6	4.3
(2) 25-34 Years	69	11.3	13.3
(3) 35-44 Years	100	16.4	19.3
(4) 45-54 Years	85	14.0	16.4
(5) 55-64 Years	62	10.2	12.0
(6) 65-74 Years	76	12.5	14.7
(7) 75+ Years	103	16.9	19.9
Total (Valid)	517	85.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	91	15.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
Average Age (Years)	N/A	N/A	53.12185687

Table 37: Respondent Length Of Tenure (Q14)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Under 1 Year	177	29.1	30.1
(2) 1-2 Years	67	11.0	11.4
(3) 3-5 Years	90	14.8	15.3
(4) 6-10 Years	65	10.7	11.1
(5) 11-20 Years	78	12.8	13.3
(6) 21+ Years	111	18.3	18.9
Total (Valid)	588	96.7	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	20	3.3	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
Average Time (Years)	N/A	N/A	8.5

Table 38: Respondent Length Of Residence In Area (Q15)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Under 1 Year	55	9.0	9.6
(2) 1-2 Years	38	6.3	6.6
(3) 3-5 Years	49	8.1	8.6
(4) 6-10 Years	43	7.1	7.5
(5) 11-20 Years	92	15.1	16.1
(6) 21+ Years	295	48.5	51.6
Total (Valid)	572	94.1	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	36	5.9	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A
Average Time (Years)	N/A	N/A	16.4

Table 39: Respondent Tenure Type (Q16)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Owned Outright	106	17.4	18.0
(2) Buying On Mortgage	69	11.3	11.7
(3) Rent From Council	101	16.6	17.1
(4) Rent From Housing Ass./Trust	117	19.2	19.8
(5) Rent From Private Landlord	171	28.1	29.0
(6) Other (Please Specify)	26	4.3	4.4
Total (Valid)	590	97.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	18	3.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 40: Adults in Household Aged 18 + (Q17)			
Base: All Respondents (W: 821)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Owned Outright	307	50.5	53.4
(2) Buying On Mortgage	213	35.0	37.0
(3) Rent From Council	31	5.1	5.4
(4) Rent From Housing Ass./Trust	12	2.0	2.1
(5) Rent From Private Landlord	3	0.5	0.5
(6) Other (Please Specify)	9	1.5	1.6
Total (Valid)	575	94.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values	33	5.4	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 41: Respondent Employment Status (Q18)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Employee In Full-Time Job	64	10.5	10.9
(2) Employee In Part-Time Job	83	13.7	14.2
(3) Self-Employed	20	3.3	3.4
(4) Gov. Supported Training	3	0.5	0.5
(5) Full-Time Education	6	1.0	1.0
(6) Unemployed	38	6.3	6.5
(7) Permanently Sick/Disabled	84	13.8	14.3
(8) Wholly Retired From Work	185	30.4	31.6
(9) Looking After The Home	71	11.7	12.1
(10) Doing Something Else	32	5.3	5.5
Total (Valid)	586	96.4	100.0
(0) Missing Values	22	3.6	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 42: Respondents With Illness, Disability Or Infirmity (Q19)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	295	48.5	50.6
(2) No	288	47.4	49.4
Total (Valid)	583	95.9	100.0
(0) Missing Values & 'Don't Know'	25	4.1	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 43: Respondents With Illness, Disability Or Infirmary That Limits Activities (Q20)			
Base: 'Yes' @ Q18 (U: 295)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Yes	254	86.1	87.3
(2) No	37	12.5	12.7
Total (Valid)	291	98.6	100.0
(0) Missing Values	4	1.4	N/A
Total (Base)	295	100.0	N/A

Table 44: Respondent Ethnicity (Q21)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) White British	516	84.9	86.4
(2) White Irish	55	9.0	9.2
(3) Other White	15	2.5	2.5
(4) Mixed White & Black Caribbean	0	0.0	0.0
(5) Mixed White & Black African	0	0.0	0.0
(6) Mixed White & Asian	2	0.3	0.3
(7) Other Mixed	3	0.5	0.5
(8) Chinese	0	0.0	0.0
(9) Black Caribbean	0	0.0	0.0
(10) Black African	0	0.0	0.0
(11) Other Black	1	0.2	0.2
(12) Asian Indian	0	0.0	0.0
(13) Asian Pakistani	0	0.0	0.0
(14) Asian Bangladeshi	1	0.2	0.2
(15) Other Asian	1	0.2	0.2
(16) Other Ethnic Group	3	0.5	0.5
Total (Valid)	597	98.2	100.0
(0) Missing Values	11	1.8	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

Table 45: Other Comments & Suggestions (Q22)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
Satisfied with benefits office	37	39.8	39.8
Improve communication/Information/Form	18	19.4	19.4
Unsatisfied with staff	16	17.2	17.2
Reduce claim time	6	6.5	6.5
Other	16	17.2	17.2
Total (Valid)	93	100.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	0	0.0	N/A
Total (Base)	93	100.0	N/A

Table 46: Sampling Window (Database)			
Base: All Respondents (608)	Frequency (f)	Base (%)	Valid (%)
(1) Window 1	335	55.1	55.1
(2) Window 2	273	44.9	44.9
Total (Valid)	608	100.0	100.0
(0) Missing Values	0	0.0	N/A
Total (Base)	608	100.0	N/A

6.3: Verbatim Comments

Q11. What needs improving - Other?

Your letters of assessment. Section needed for shared ownership properties. By the time my claim had been assessed my circumstances had changed again - this happened several times over a five month period. Letters of assessment. Details need to be simplified. Clarification of words used or at the end of each assessment a summary to say 'what this actually means is'. Less paper please. On occasion I have received as many as five letters a day in connection with council tax, housing benefit, requests for evidence already supplied, invoices...

You should be allowed to go into one of the private interview rooms, however insignificantly your problem is as people are entitled to privacy!!! Also, the main outstanding problem I have noticed, is when people are asked to wait in the "waiting area" for extremely long periods. I have even heard people through the grapevine moaning incessantly about this particular problem. Lets fact it, the general public have work to go to, other appointments throughout the general course of the day and mothers have their children's welfare to attend to! So, I feel that your staff should be more respectful to the general public when they get a little bit impatient. There was one incident a few years ago when I had to wait for one hour and three quarters just to be seen at the clerks desk!

When you receive your letter telling you how much benefit you are entitled to, it is impossible to work out where the figures have come from as it is not explained clearly enough, I think a better explanation is needed, but not on a separate piece of paper as this can be just as confusing, maybe having it explained as you go?

When payments are made you get a letter telling you a certain date, and you ring and they tell you something different

When income fluctuates frequently, a claim needs to be made each month. This results in a mountain of paperwork and time for both myself and the staff of the benefits agency.

We receive the forms through the post notifying us of benefits awarded. Perfectly satisfactory.

Very good

Understanding a persons appeal against overpaid benefits. My appeal was unsuccessful as I used the last couple of weeks to clean the carpet in my flat etc and moving out and I was not allowed to claim that benefit and had to pay it back. This, I felt, was wrongly judged.

Told we were eligible on the telephone but claim was turned down. If I had left my partner whilst ill I would have received benefits

To get the right person who knows what they're talking about

The workload of the staff, as my claim took so long I had to ask for it to be backdated and fill in an appeal form also. I even brought down all the documents asked for personally, in fact twice in a day. Thank you.

The way that change of address is dealt with. Some people rely on housing benefit and a late payment of rent on the first month looks terrible to the new landlord.

The telephone service is very good, especially when you are put through to an officer.

Then the problems start. You ask for information: how is the application proceeding? Well it takes six weeks. Do I need to give any information? We'll write to you (no good). I need to speak to a supervisor (she's at a meeting). It took two weeks for her to come back to me (no good). Very pleasant lady at the time and the benefit application was done. Too much red tape and most staff are stressed out. From ex-civil servant.

The telephone manner of the reception needs improving as well as the council tax office staffs manner. The forms now are very unclear of what you need, the forms need to be improved so that we can understand them more clearly.

The system is too complicated. Communications between you and the job centre leave a lot to be desired. Staff are good, it's the system that needs work on. Staff should be encouraged to solve problems rather than outside 'specialists' management should listen to staff.

The supporting letters and calculations should be simplified

The Poole benefit office always loses claim forms and other paperwork. Staff have said it is better to bring forms down and get them copied. This is a pain because the office is a bus ride away (there is limited parking). Also quite often and this happened to me twice I've brought the information down and it has not been actioned until I've telephoned to chase it up. My friends and I find the housing benefit department very hard work.

The money I receive changes every two weeks. I think they need to improve decision making and stick to the decision they make, so we know where we stand!

The letters explaining the claim are complicated, they need to be made a bit simpler!

The letter which informs you how much benefit you are entitled to. Put how much you have to pay in bold figures. Weekly and monthly.

The information of how benefit is calculated

The forms are too intrusive/the forms explaining awards are too complicated in the way they are explained to understand.

The fact you get punished if you bother to work, you get rewarded if you don't work.

The explanation of how they work out how much benefit you are entitled to.

The complicated calculations and waste of paper when authorised.

The attitude of some staff on the phone and at the office, I felt like I was a waste of space/scum and it shouldn't be like this.

Telephone manner is deplorable, no thought whatsoever is put into practice when dealing with stressed clients. When dealing with someone with disabilities especially speech their lack of empathy is beyond belief. Training must be given in this area. Answer phones are useless to someone with a speech impediment. Letters are far too abrupt and curt. No thought is given to honest people.

Take taken and accuracy - correct documents leave a lot to be desired

Sometimes it was difficult to get through.

Six to eight weeks. After six weeks.

Sensitivity to personal circumstances, not all treated the same.

Sending out correct information

Reply to benefit claim form not too clear

Regularly mistakes are made by the assessor and overpayments are made. On one occasion my benefit was reduced to 5p per week due to an overpayment! That was a tough time as I had to re-budget without the housing benefit money.

Reading material (Such as a Women, Bella etc)

Please make all letters more understandable and please put into Layman's terms not gobbledegook. Sometimes it does just not make sense.

People give you different information depending on who you speak to

Parking spaces sometimes difficult to get.

Notification letters need to be more clearer

Not accepting photocopies of savings books (building society).

Normally I am satisfied with the service but on the last occasion it was unacceptable. I moved into another flat in the same block and came to your office with the new tenancy agreement etc. I went into a private room and explained the situation in full. The lady dealing with me took copies of all paperwork and assured me that my Housing benefit and Council Tax would be changed accordingly. I heard nothing for 2.5 weeks, made two phone calls to your office, spoke to Mr. Francis who kindly sorted it out for me personally. I received no benefit for 4 weeks! I then received a call saying I hadn't paid my Council Tax but I wasn't informed I had to arrange another Direct Debit. I was told it would carry on from the previous one. Not very happy.

None of the above. Very happy.
Needs a proper table to sit at to fill the form out.

My support worker dealt with my claim, so I really don't have a good knowledge of benefits office.

My Council Tax forms were filled in by a person who came to the house and also filled in the pension forms. I have in the past filled in these forms and found them quite confusing.

My benefit was calculated incorrectly so it took a long time to receive a correct calculation

More co-operation between department/other areas

More car parking spaces needed and should not have to pay for visit.

Making the calculations easier to understand

Make it accessible to the Internet. Much easier less postage costs and less paper as well as being quicker

Length of time sometimes

Later hours as I always have baby.

Lack of communication between staff.

Job centre/income support - difficult to contact by telephone.

It takes too long for my claims to be assessed.

It takes quite some time to have our claim to be processed. Also claims forms can be complicated to fill in.

It takes a long time to find and fill out all the financial info requested - I don't want to do it wrong but I don't understand some of the info they want.

If you have savings it is a waste of time applying.

I was dissatisfied because of the length of time. I know that Housing Benefit cannot process a claim without confirmation from the DBSS. This desperately needs looking into. I think 9 weeks is totally unacceptable.

I think that it has helped me a lot, if I didn't have it, it would be more money to pay out. I am a single parent and because I am on benefits it helps me a lot.

I think approx 6 weeks to sort claims and make payments is bad!!!

I recently discovered I had been overpaid/then underpaid because my wage fluctuated.

Is there any other way this can be avoided? I have been supplying info regularly and up to date.

I no longer am claiming any benefits

I had a man from your office fill them in for me. Great help.

I had a home visit from the benefit manager, who gave every help possible. I must add that I like to think I have average intelligence, but I can imagine a lot of elderly persons would struggle with forms and need all the help they can get.

I found the letters stating that rent and council tax benefit has been agreed. It tells you what the government say you have, how much you have coming in, less %, leaving =.

I find these papers so confusing. My rent is due monthly. My benefit is paid on weekly basis. I can never work out how the figure is realised or related.

I find it difficult physically. I find it difficult to answer this questionnaire as I have arthritis. I have not had any contact with your office or staff, apart from the lady who came to my home and filled out the questions with me, I gave all the details, she was very helpful indeed. I have filled out all the questions I could. PS I did reply to your first questionnaire.

I do not know what to say - staff just call and I help best I can - your staff have called twice in the last 18 months (approx). Very nice, very kind, the last 2 can come any time - and we could go for a pub lunch!

I applied from outside the area and came with all the relevant paperwork. I was consulted in private by Mr. Paul Hudson who dealt with my benefit claim extremely efficiently. I cannot fault his service with me. On a government level there are clearly insufficient funds available for housing benefit (on wages above £12,5) or council tax assistance (on wages above £12,5). Furthermore because of 'workload' I understand that to claim your benefit the council are running approx. 8 weeks in arrears which is not assisting those on low incomes.

I am working in Poole Hospital when I became permanent staff on the ward my benefits were stopped. Because I used to work as a nurse so there wasn't much change. Good job I had some savings, as I have a little girl and no family in England and I don't get any maintenance. Thank you.

I am sure that I applied online, just to see if I qualified - which I didn't. However a form came in the post which I filled in. It came back with lots of things incorrectly accounted by myself. I wasn't sure what I was claiming from the form, there was a great deal of different things to claim - in fact I thought it was to do with the council tax rebate I got for a single parent (adult) looking after two children! Totally confusing!!

I am grateful for what benefit I receive, I would not be able to manage otherwise. Thank you. I am a disabled housebound woman of 7 years, when I have needed to make a claim for housing benefit, the officers have always come into my home. I have always had friendly competent officers, the advice has always been understandable, I do not have any complaints whatsoever.

Help with filling out forms

Given the present administrative system in local government the methods are satisfactory from a customer's point of view. But local government has much to learn from the successful elements of the private sector. Check with your councillors who run successful business operations.

Friendliness of some of the staff at office and the amount of proof data with the claim form is what took us a while

Free phone service, quicker responding time

Forms far too complicated

Following my initial phone call I was sent the claim forms. I have never visited the Benefits Office.

Extremely dissatisfied with the rent valuation, my rent is a fair rent but full payment was refused by a capping on all rents in my area, I was subsequently refused full rent by an amount of £5.76 per week, on low income this deficit is crucial, furthermore I have had problems with my landlord because my rent (like every other financial agreement in this country) is payable "monthly" whereas I am receiving payments every 4 weeks.

Duplication of effort when there are changes to report - the forms have to be filled in again. Data should be retained so that only bits that have changed need to be reported. The schedule that comes with the letter setting out your income and claim details is very difficult to understand. Mine turned out to be incorrect but I think most people would be inclined to accept it because they are unable to fathom the calculations.

Due to the fact, I through medical reasons got a transfer to sheltered housing, I can only say, the help I received was beyond duty, sadly the lady concerned has since retired, however if she is the standard, no more can be asked.

Crediting my rent account before a decision was made - has left me with a £5 debt just as I returned to work.

Claim form states ID required at back of form and lists quite a few but doesn't tell you how many are required for acceptable proof, also I think providing originals necessitates one or maybe more visits to the benefit office. People are reluctant to do any of this by post.

Car parking - a difficult one I know!

Calculation form of benefit awarded.

Both housing/council tax people are very helpful. The trouble they have is with pension credit. Without our going to the office and informing them both housing/council tax they would not have known that the credit had gone up, which has made our life very unsure of if it is worth the trouble.

Benefit letters sent out very abstract and usually contradictory

Being totally reliant on knowledge/judgement of others, disconcerting and demeaning, plus motivational of naivete

Being told what happens IF you claim

As I had filled in the form at home with the help of my daughter, I only handed the form and relevant pages to the member of staff who went away and photocopied some parts and then passed them back to me. I don't feel I can comment much on the service.

As I didn't actually contact the housing office it is difficult for me to comment. I claimed JSA and was given the forms for housing benefit. I filled them in and that was it, very simple and I didn't have to do anything. I was very satisfied, many thanks.

Arranged over phone

Any changes in my circumstances I make sure I visit the Benefits Office with all the relevant paper work. What I would like is the same person to deal with my case and any changes that there may be. Each time a change is made the paper work returns with a different name to contact.

An interpreter must make an appointment with the staff service. A lack of communication between staff and deaf people. Fax service or minicom (type talk). Accuracy on accessing/calculating my council tax bill and doing their job properly, which we pay high council tax for them to do

A means whereby small children under school age can be kept interested, i.e. silent cartoons VDR?

Q16. In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation – Other?

Women's Refuse

Women's Refuge

Western Challenge 1/2 ownership, 1/2 rent

Shared ownership with a Housing Association

Shared ownership

Shared Appreciation Mortgage (R.B.S)

Reverts back to owner on my death

Part council and part private landlord

Magna Care Home

Lodger

Living with Dad

It's a reversal scheme, I own it until I die.

It is my son's flat. He is the leaseholder.

I have now moved in with a partner and am no longer claiming. Home is owned by father of my children (we are separated)

Friend

Equity release on part value 2.

And 5% ownership

Q17. How many adults aged 18 or over are living here?

Shared house 5 people.

13 people adults because it is a trust run house

Q18. Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present – Doing something else?

Working part time and full time college student

Waiting for a council property so I can afford to go out and work full time and support myself.

Voluntary

Voluntary

Unable to work because due to have baby

Temporarily sick

Supply teacher, therefore spasmodic employment

Supply teacher

Sick (long term incapacity)

Part time employed and self employed.

On maternity leave, normally work full time

On incapacity benefit, sick

On incapacity benefit at the moment

On incapacity benefit

On incapacity and doing up to 16 hours per week.

Off sick as had operation in hospital

Main witness for CPS (Crown Prosecution Service). Police put me in new area for my safety.

Made redundant and looking for another job.

Looking after wife who has Alzheimer's

In recovery from Class A drugs

In recovery

In prison till 2nd October

I have learning difficulties (Downs Syndrome) and do voluntary work - recycling, charity shop etc on 3 days a week. I would like to do paid work and social services are investigating ways to make this happen.

Hopefully short term sick (3-6 months)

Full time carer.

Full time carer for wife

Foster parent/PT student

Disability - not permanent

College

Carer

Both profoundly deaf, seeking employment to get off benefits

Appealing for incapacity benefit due to back injury

Ankle operations and not working at the moment

Am long term sick and receive incapacity benefit.

Q22. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Your staff have always been very courteous

You ask for too much ID (like bank statements, etc.).

When sending all the information asked for and still got Housing Benefits wrong.

When I went to sort out housing benefit/council tax I saw 7 different people.

When I received HB and CTB, the services were efficient and quick - when I happily no longer needed help and moved I received a new CT demand at my old address - so I think the staff find some procedures as confusing as us.

When I moved into this flat these were things I should have done. But 4 months this year workmen here, new radiators and all new hot and cold water pipes. Was told when I came it should be done in about 2 years, was 3 1/2 years.

When are we having new heating as we can't turn it down

We send all relevant changes to our circumstances and answer all queries but your staff still can't calculate our bills correctly, they are totally incompetent and I wish this box was bigger and I could expand on this.

Very satisfied with council support.

Very happy with benefits office ta!

Very grateful for your help.

Very grateful for the help received

Too much time wasted going back and forth. Staff at office are helpful but held back by pointless and ridiculous procedure and regulations. I have been to the civic centre three times and still have to go back again (even though I had all the paperwork the first time). Absolutely absurd.

To improve the time it takes to make the decision about receiving benefits and to organise themselves better and communicate with each other better.

This was my second application for benefit 26 as I moved house in January. The second time was much easier as they had all my former details on file and was quicker and smarter than the first time.

There was an industrial dispute the day I went to the office. Some of the staff were very abrupt and one told another staff member she should have sent me away. Another was fine. I hadn't known about the dispute when I went to the office having just moved house. It wasn't the best time to go to the offices!

The whole process of trying to claim benefits of any kind seems to have been designed to be as difficult as can be, unless of course you know how to work the system. Unfortunately I don't, no income since March!

The whole procedure is not easy, it needs to be less complicated (so much paperwork needed).

The transfer back to work and sorting out my housing caused myself a great deal of stress as no one seemed to know what they were doing.

The system of calculation is too complicated for the normal persons to understand. I always feel that I am being short-changed on benefit.

The staff have always been most helpful and treated me with respect.

The staff at the office went the extra yard for my son and I. We feel very respected.

The staff at PBC Benefits Section have always been very efficient and pleasant - not once ever making me feel embarrassed about claiming housing/council tax benefit.

The rent, housing benefit didn't ever cover what I was paying previous to being unemployed, This resulted in me losing my flat.

The officer visited me in my home and filled out the forms for me. She was extremely polite and helpful.

The council has always had bad communication problems.

Thanks

Thank you! Good bye!

Thank you for the monies to get myself accommodated.

Thank you for all the help you are giving me, it is good to know although old, somebody cares.

Thank you

Staff need to make sure the info they give you is correct, as being told incorrect info my staff at the office delayed my claim and nearly resulted in our benefit being stopped.

Staff need to be polite and a little sympathetic. I once spoken to by a gentleman at your office very abruptly regarding rent arrears caused by an overlook on my account of other benefits, I was dreadfully upset by his manner.

Poor cross references to other benefit agencies over other benefit rates. Changes in rates of ones benefit should automatically adjust other benefits. It shouldn't require all the paperwork and hassle that occurs at present e.g. increase in incapacity benefit rate.

Poole Borough Council is far more efficient than Bournemouth who give benefit queries to the hard pushed citizens' advice bureau.

Please note. Shena Gemat came to see me 18th May, I did not have to visit your offices. I did make one home call.

Personally, I hate going to claim for any benefit and wish that somehow it could be achieved in a more pleasant atmosphere.

Parking in order to visit main council building in Poole can be problematic, Poole Park the only option; and that alternative sometimes unavailable.

Parking charges for residents should be greatly reduced at all car parks. Better public toilets and more!!

Overall the staff have been very helpful!

Overall service OK, however staff on the telephone were very rude and condescending.

On my return to full time employment when my council tax benefit ceased, the calculations for the remaining period of the current year were incorrect and I had to contact the local authority and ask them to put it right.

On answering questions about the staff at the council office, when I did eventually speak to a person that knew what they were doing they were highly helpful, I believe the advisers may need more training with speaking and helping customers.

Not happy with benefit system little help for people who can't work as too sick

No matter how much evidence you take in, it's never enough, I have had to go back and forth coz you take in what they have asked for but then they give you another list and so on, it's a little silly.

Nice people, a bit bureaucratic

My housing/council tax benefit claim is always done by post.

My housing benefit claim took two months before I received it, even though I gave all the information I needed as soon as they asked. In two months, I was nearly homeless.

My friend picks up the claim forms for me, was done by post, telephone call and collected.

Making the letter regarding benefit and how it is calculated easier to understand and more info on how much benefit can be awarded in different circumstances.

Lack of communication with staff to staff

Just thank you to all the phone people.

I've only dealt with the benefits office by telephone but have always found the staff courteous and helpful.

It would be so very helpful if an employee of PBC housing benefits called on people that were unable to go to the benefits department.

It takes time to sort out the council tax, which has been ongoing since 1st June.

In general Poole Borough Council does a very good job.

I'm always appreciative about notifying change of circumstance/income. Even with the smallest of change errors always occur and the time taken to deal with this is too long.

I would like to work in future after court case and get back on my feet. I love Poole and have for many years, I would like to do a lot to keep it so lovely.

I would like to thank you for the help I've had in the last ten years. I couldn't have been looked after any better. Thanks again.

I would like to say that I think that we should not need to pay council tax if we are single parents.

I was very pleased with the way that the staff treated me

I was very pleased with the way that all the staff treated me and the service given.

I was very impressed with the help and utmost courtesy with which I was treated at the benefits in Poole.

I used to come down to you with my papers once a year when the pension went up but the last time I had a problem getting up steps; I am nearly 84 and been ill a lot and come by taxi. I now send for Council Benefit tax benefits by post. Sorry I can't help you more. I am white and English but after breaking my wrist and losing my sight can't do much now.

I have only been the recipient of Housing and Tax Benefits for three months and have had help from the Local Pensions Service to make my claim. He was T. Stillman, so you must overlook my lack of knowledge in this matter.

I have experienced incorrect information being held on the computer for up to one year!! The Alliance and Leicester link leaves a lot to be desired they accept little responsibility for lost payments (lost in the system).

I have been receiving Housing and Council Tax benefits since October 24 when I was guaranteed Pension Credit until 21. These were backdated to October 23.

I have a dispute as to the time of a discision about on overpayment I am supposed to owe the dept, have no idea where it come from or when, have been waiting from beginning Dec, till now, no letter or answer to my query as yet. Not Happy.

I had a very positive experience when contacting the offices by telephone

I don't understand many of the benefit systems and call for assistance. I try to claim as little as possible as I'm scared to death of getting it 'wrong' and then being in trouble. For example, each year March-April, my pension goes up with inflation and I can get, over the course of a few weeks, 2, 3, 4 letters each telling me my entitlement is altered so I must pay a different sum. So try as I may I don't know how much I need to pay so end up asking, do I owe anything? And just what must I pay for the coming year?

I don't think when are left some money in a will it should affect you claiming council tax rebate.

I consider myself very fortunate to live in this flat

I am very satisfied with the service.

I am very satisfied and grateful always for the support and attention. It has a huge impact on my well being.

I am upset that I can't go on the list for Warden controlled accommodation because I own my own house. I think this is unfair and in favour of people who haven't bothered.

I am housebound. Everything has been sorted through the post. I am very satisfied with the treatment I have received making the claims.

I am educated to degree level and still found the form a complete nightmare to complete

I am a very satisfied tenant, thank you
Housing benefit not paid until JSA awarded, JSA not paid until housing benefit awarded (catch 22).

Have ticked a lot of neither agree/disagree boxes as I had never seen the housing benefit form to fill in. A social worker had done it for me as I am partially sighted and forms are sometimes hard to read.

Generally wonderful staff at the benefits office, however the letters sent out to explain the benefit awarded very over complicated - an easier way to monitor payments on-line!
Found the staff very helpful but found getting all the relevant information to make a claim very difficult. When making a claim is when you need the money, found the whole process took a rather long time to go through.

Everything is OK

Everything is fine and I'm very happy with all services from both departments of housing.

Everyone who has dealt with me has treated me with respect and efficient manner.
Council contacted me regarding council tax.
Could staff explain what documents you need to bring, so the claim can be dealt with more prompt

As I'm disabled it would be nice not to have to come in to show you the increases in my benefits. You should be able to phone in to tell you the new amounts or send in photocopies.
Am generally pleased with the help I have received from my local benefits office.

Although form is long and sometimes repetitive, the efficiency of staff and correspondence is quick.

All the letters I received had several spelling mistakes in them and very poor grammar. I have a terminal illness and was treated very unsympathetically and am going to appeal and complain.

A telephone line that only answers when ready to speak to person! (Can't afford keep holding on line).

I found that all the staff that work in the benefits office are very helpful. They could not have been any more kinder and helpful to me.